Interview with

JASON MICHELS

At His Residence

Beaufort, North Carolina

Interviewed by Anna Marie Switzer, July 1, 2024

Transcribed by Anna Marie Switzer

Down East Change project

Anna Marie Switzer 00:00
Okay, hi. This is Anna Marie Switzer, and I'm here with Jason Michels, right?

Jason Michels 00:04
Yes, ma'am.

Anna Marie Switzer 00:05
And today we're going to be doing an interview for the Core Sound Museum and our internship project. Alright, so just, I'm going to keep it a little bit closer to you, but just to start us off, can I get your full name, when you were born, your birthday?

Jason Michels 00:23
Yes, ma'am. So full name is Jason Hancock Michels. And I was born on September 22 of '76 and Morehead City at Carteret General Hospital. So, right? You're close.

Anna Marie Switzer 00:36
I'm also a September birthday, okay. And so, is your family from the area? Or did they move here?

Jason Michels 00:42
My mother's family was from the area. I mean, dated back to living actually on the Banks that many years ago. My father was not—he actually came here through the Coast Guard and was stationed at Fort Macon, and met my mother, and subsequently they got married. They moved to Florida at one point, but then moved back, and my whole life has been in the area.

Anna Marie Switzer 01:02
Perfect. Can you tell me a little bit more about your mother's family?

Jason Michels 01:05
The Hancocks was her maiden name, and that's my middle name. Mainly fishermen, lived and worked on the water. Like I said, she came from big family, seven brothers and three sisters. Granddaddy was a commercial fisherman by trade and like I said, I guess just in dating on back, actually whalers at some point. But just a lot of local history, a lot of most of them grew up on, or all of them grew up on Harkers Island. Some of them moved away. But my whole childhood and life has been on Harkers Island, other than get married and moving here several years ago. But other than that, it's been around the Island and area.

Anna Marie Switzer 01:52
Do you know the story of how your parents met?

Jason Michels 01:55
A little bit. I know that the there was a gentleman in the church that was stationed at the Coast Guard, an older gentleman, and Daddy was fairly younger, and I guess maybe he invited him, maybe to his church social. And then I guess maybe he met mother at the social, and I guess they hit it off. I don't really know a whole lot about

details, but I know that's how they got introduced, and then, like I said, got married, and I guess the rest is history.

Anna Marie Switzer 02:26
Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up on Harkers Island?

Jason Michels 02:30
Yes, ma'am. Harkers Island—I guess I remember my granddaddy lived to be in his mid 90s, where he passed and his name was Charlie William Hancock, but they called him Charlie Bill, and I remember him saying, seemed like he lived in two or three different live lifetimes or eras. And I was thinking, "What is he talking about?" Well, here I am in my late 40s now, and I can just see the change that I've witnessed in my life, as opposed to current day. And it has changed a lot, even in my life. The Island was awesome place, and still is. And no—it was—I mean, I couldn't ask for a better childhood or place to grow up in the island. Like I said it was simple, simpler times than what you think of today. I mean, come home from school, do your homework, get on your bike and be going 'til supper time. If you want to go swimming, you went swimming. If you and your buddy were going to go in the boat and go hydro sliding or skiing, you do that. When you go fishing, you do that, like the whole back roads on the island now, that was all gravel and like I said, there was some tourists or some non-locals, or people that had a summer home over there, but nowhere near what it is now. But they were still there, more frequent in the summertime, but it was a close-knit community where you knew pretty much, you know, you knew your friends, their friends, the parents, their parents, and everybody. Kind of several different churches, but seemed like everybody still, like I said, got along really good and just a great place to grow up.

Anna Marie Switzer 03:31
Yeah, that sounds really cool. When you—the idea of change is kind of what we're like, looking to investigate. And so when you hear like change in Down East, what, what do you really think about? Like, what topics are you thinking about?

Jason Michels 04:30
I don't fault anybody for wanting to move here, right? Because, I mean, I think I'm spoiled. I grew up here. But as far as more of the change, I guess, would be development, as far as building homes, and then a lot of the locals actually selling their home to move off a very valuable piece of property a little bit off the island or a little bit further away from the water. That's been the biggest change, as far as the amount of non-locals that either live there full time, or have a summer home over there. That's, that's what's changed. It continues to change in my life. And that's the biggest thing, I think of is actually the just how the community, or how the base has changed, where it's not 60 or 70% or 80% local; it's now—don't quote me on this—50/50, or 40/60, where there's a lot more out of state plates, or people you don't, you don't recognize over there now. But that's probably the biggest thing, other than the people. And then, like I said, building any vacant spot on the island you've been over there, there's not many that doesn't have a home or some type of structure on it now. So that was been a big change.

Anna Marie Switzer 05:41

When did you like, do you remember around when you started noticing that change? Or did it happen, like, really slowly?

Jason Michels 05:47
I think it was slowly. And as a younger person, you don't really—I'm sure it's happening, but you're not concerned with that. You hear people talk about a little bit, but it's not really—but it seems like, like everything else, the older you get, the more you kind of pay attention to stuff like that. And the more you do notice it, where, I don't know, the past 20 or 30 years, you can really see it, as far as how much of it is, is non-locals, or people that have a summer house there now, as opposed to people that lived out their whole life,

Anna Marie Switzer 06:16
That, that's really interesting. I understand, like the slowly over time aspect is, when you're younger, you don't know what to look for.

Jason Michels 06:23
Right. Yes, ma'am.

Anna Marie Switzer 06:24
And so moving a little bit over to Cherry Point—Karen told me that you work at Cherry Point. She also said you were an excellent Carver, so I loved your Facebook page.

Jason Michels 06:33
I worked at Cherry Point. We'll stick with that.

Anna Marie Switzer 06:36
Okay, okay, let's start with Cherry Point. So can you tell me a little bit about what you do at Cherry Point?

Jason Michels 06:42
Yes. So I'm actually in a field called Quality Assurance, and it can pretty wide field, as far as it could be actually overseeing somebody perform a process, or it could be like performing an audit on a process. But that's why I'm in the quality assurance division, and my main goal is actually like overseeing aircraft engines as far as the maintenance and just the overall process. It's a good job.

Anna Marie Switzer 07:07
And how did you end up with this job? Like, what, what led you to?

Jason Michels 07:12
So I actually, after high school, a close friend and I actually went to school to New Bern, which was Craven Community College and just started taking some classes, honestly, with the hope of getting hired on to Cherry Point. And we got in something back then, it was called the co-op program, where basically, like, entry level to kind of get your foot in the door. And you would work with somebody, and if you did well in that, it actually led to the apprenticeship program. And then, if you do well in that you were like a journeyman level mechanic,

where you would come out of that program as, basically, at that point, what they would call, like a full time or permanent employee. So that's kind of how I got my start was actually through Craven through their Co-Op program.

Anna Marie Switzer 07:58
And you mentioned, like going to school with the intention of working at Cherry Point. Was that something that you always knew that you wanted to do?

Jason Michels 08:05
No, not at all. I didn't really—I wasn't one of those kind of people that had a had a plan as some people, I guess, probably maybe have a plan at a young age. I want to be this or be that. I didn't really. We're kind of far away from a four year school. I know I could have done that, but it's like, what we were talking about, where you were from, is—If you're from Charlotte, Raleigh Chapel Hill, that's kind of on the same spectrum. It seemed like be easier to transition from there to there, as far as from—I had several friends do it, I mean, but that would have never really was, didn't really put a whole lot of thought in it. And then probably senior year in high school, we had a couple friends that had already got hired on through the co-op program, and it was kind of getting harder, maybe, to get hired on, and that was a path that you that was, if you did well in school, it seemed like you may not got hired on in a month, but if you waited long enough and did your time, it seems like the job would eventually open where you could get your foot in the door.

Anna Marie Switzer 08:09
And so you talk about, like a couple of people in your school were working at Cherry Point, and it was getting tougher. Do you know why it was getting a little bit harder?

Jason Michels 08:51
It's always, it's always been, maybe somewhat hard to get in. It's according what field you want to get into. But civil service was originally set up for, like, retired people coming out of service, and there's still a lot of those great mechanics or people up there that actually went that route. So you constantly kind of been competing against them to get a job. And I did not go into service. So like I said, it wasn't, wasn't a guaranteed get in. I know several people that have tried for several years and never got in, but it's, I guess, making sure you're choosing the right career path. And some of it's about timing too. But that's kind of that was the, the easiest, or not easiest, maybe the, the safest route in order to get a job at Cherry Point at the time, was, was, was pursuing the Co-Op program. Yeah.

Anna Marie Switzer 10:00
And so did you like, just kind of go through the ranks, is that, like—how was your experience like over the past, like, few decades? That's very quick.

Jason Michels 10:10
Yeah. So I've actually, it's crazy, like the old saying, the days go slow, but years go fast. So I've been up there 28 years, and I've seen change up there too. But it, yeah, to answer your question, I started out as, like a co-op apprentice, and then graduated from apprenticeship as a mechanic, and then did that for a few years. And then

some other career paths opened up, and one of them was quality assurance, that I was fortunate to kind of get my foot in the door in that department, and I've been in, been that for several years, and kind of worked my way up through that, and that's what I'm doing now.

Anna Marie Switzer 10:46
Um, what changes would you say, like, have you noticed specifically at Cherry Point? Like, not even really Down East, but like, within your work?

Jason Michels 10:57
Well, I mean, I guess everything, everything changes. And I guess technology thing-- like when I when I started Cherry Point, I don't think I had even a cell phone. And maybe when I first started, it was a flip phone where, what percent, 97% of population now has a smartphone. But you know what I mean, the work is still, we're getting new workload into as a result of the new aircraft and new year, new things, but it's just, I guess, just work in general just changes over years. But it's been a, it's been good to me.

Anna Marie Switzer 11:28
Those were two factors I was wondering about technology, and then also with like, 9/11 and like the War on Terror. Like, do you see any changes in the work that you're doing based off of, like, the political changes, or is it pretty much like you guys are producing, like, continuing to do, like, steady work?

Jason Michels 11:46
It's steady work. It has ebbs and flows. I mean, it's up and down as far as how much we have at certain times. But, yeah, it's, it's been, it's been steady over the years. And it's like I said, after the 9/11, I know that I actually was on a third shift at the time, and we worked, I mean, like the most they ever worked with. We were working 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and we did that for a good, a good while. So that was a real big peak in workload, probably honestly the most since I've been there, but after that, it's just been, you know, some weeks or months, you have more than others, but that's just how it is. So it's all cool and what demand they have out in the field.

Anna Marie Switzer 12:31
How would you, or how would you describe your feelings towards the work that you do? Like, do you enjoy working at Cherry Point?

Jason Michels 12:38
I do. I mean, I think in my job is something different every day, because I'm kind of overseeing maintenance process, and there's constantly people turning over, new people coming in, parts, wiring out, different things you've never seen before. So, but I like it. It's something different every day. I don't mind when the alarm clock goes off. I don't mind going to work. It's something that, I mean, I enjoy my time off, don't get me wrong, but I mean, I don't mind. It is something different every day, and kind of challenges there, and you pretty much, you almost have to bring your A-game. It seems like every day to be on constant look out for something that you're trying to prevent from getting to the next phase.

Anna Marie Switzer 13:17
Mhm. I think my dad works as, I don't know if I'm supposed to, but my dad works a similar kind of job, and he works, like, with school system.

Jason Michels 13:26
Okay.

Anna Marie Switzer 13:26
Or, like, he works for the school system in Charlotte, so it's, like, overseeing, kind of like that. So that's, that's kind of what he says about.

Jason Michels 13:32
Right.

Anna Marie Switzer 13:33
Um, Karen was telling me that your dad also worked at Cherry Point. Um, did you get or, like, did you guys have similar feelings about it? Like, where you have, like this, like, you enjoy your work there. Like, how did he feel about it?

Jason Michels 13:45
Yeah, I mean, I think he, he did. He got a later start to me, because he had done a couple other things, because he pulled four years in the Coast Guard active duty, and then he was in reserve. But he did a little bit. He actually had a boat built on Harkers Island. High Tide Boat Works built a sightseeing vessel that he operated out of Clearwater, Florida for years. And then he actually sold that and moved back. And then after that is when he got a job at Cherry Point and, like I said, he, he, he had a pretty positive attitude. That's just like a model he made. He made the model prior to having the boat built. But yeah, like I said, both of my parents are especially, I mean, Daddy, towards work, had a positive attitude. I never heard him really complain, or have any, you know, nothing that would determine if he went to work there.

Anna Marie Switzer 14:49
Um, Karen kind of told me that, or she-- like the way that she's explained her dad's experience at Cherry Point has kind of been different than that. So have you seen like, big changes across, like, just kind of who it depends on, like, who is working there? Or do you think that there's like, generation?

Jason Michels 15:06
I think it's probably true any anywhere you work. And I mean your job, maybe what you get out of is what you put in it, and your attitude has a big impact, and it's all important if you like and respect your supervisor, and it's reciprocated, and you feel like he appreciates or she appreciates the good job you're doing. It makes your job probably more enjoyable. And I've been fortunate. I've worked for a couple people that probably weren't ideal as supervisors, but for the most part, I'd say, you know, I've had a positive experience, and nothing that's really deterred me from wanting to go to work the next day.

Anna Marie Switzer 15:40
That definitely makes sense.

Jason Michels 15:42
Yeah, and I was fortunate that I started out as a mechanic and then kind of went to a different, a different job and got that. And it wasn't, I applied for it a couple times before I actually got it. But it wasn't like I had put in for jobs for 20 years and never got anything that I thought that I was qualified for. I could see that somebody on that path would probably have a different attitude or outlook than I have. But, like I said, it's, it's been, it's been fun for me.

Anna Marie Switzer 16:15
In terms of, like, viewing Cherry Point, as a military base. Um, I have, like, my family has a lot of background in the military. So do you feel like, you kind of feel like the military culture at Cherry Point, or is it kind of like a separate sphere in what you're working?

Jason Michels 16:31
Yes, probably separate, but there is a lot of that. As far as it's all according, who's probably in charge at the time, as far as the colonel or the CO, as far as how much of that is filtered down. But it's still, I mean, you still feel that sense of, I mean, working on something for the betterment of the country. Not to sound corny, but you know what you're doing every day. People actually are using out there. Men and women are using it to defend our country, basically. So I mean, that is that, but it's a whole different, I'd say, mindset and atmosphere of active duty, I would say, as opposed to being a civilian, even working on a government installation, even though I've never actually been active duty.

Anna Marie Switzer 17:09
So would you say, like, some sort of, like, because you guys are doing, like, big, like Cherry Point produces and great things, so like, kind of, like a sense of American pride would you say?

Jason Michels 17:20
Sure, yeah, for sure.

Anna Marie Switzer 17:22
That's really cool. Did you ever consider going into, like, active duty or the Coast Guard?

Jason Michels 17:26
The stability is really nice. Maybe one little bit, and if I was going to choose a path, it would have been that, didn't really never got serious enough talk to a recruiter or anything, but like I said, it worked out. And just to back up a little bit, when first graduated high school, the friend and I had actually went to the Craven together. We did some commercial fishing together, so, but we did that when we were going to school. So we went and bought some crab pots. And they call it, pulled crab pots for a couple years, and actually use that kind of to pay for the school. But that'll give you a respect for hard work, or just what it takes working in order, a lot of respect for those people. It's, it's a tough job, but that kind, of that may have driven me to Cherry Point more. And I

think my think my parents, especially my mother, was very pleased when, when I decided to pursue a job at Cherry Point and got hired on because you kind of saw a different side of things. As far as, you know, you're worried about the weather, you're worried about what they're paying for, the catch, you're worrying about several other things that you can't really control. And then it seems like it's a more stable job, and really the benefits is what's so appealing to people. I think because you can make more money in the private sector than you can at Cherry Point, I'm convinced of that. But it's just your benefits, as far as your, your leave-- you get your health benefits, your retirement and different options like that. It really makes it so desirable around here. I think, I think that more so than actually the money, even though the money is competitive, but I think it's just the benefits that come along with it is what's so appealing to people. For sure, yes, ma'am.

Anna Marie Switzer 19:00
Um, did you ever, like in those years that you were working as a commercial fisherman, did you ever fully consider doing that like for the rest of your life?

Jason Michels 19:17
Not really. I think what we did that to kind of, maybe we wanted to do it, I guess, I mean, made a little bit of money at it, but we did that, even though, I think we may have started going to school even before we started doing that. So it was something that was kind of, if Cherry Point never worked out, I don't know what path I would have taken. I doubt it would have been a commercial fishing either way. But that was just something that we did at the time. Like I said, I think at least when we started going over, when I started going to school, that was kind of my end goal, was to get an education, but I wanted to get a job at Cherry Point as well.

Anna Marie Switzer 19:56
Did you like, did a lot of your classmates end up working as commercial fish, fishermen, or did they—like, where—?

Jason Michels 20:01
A few, I'd say very few, really. As far as looking back on people that, um, that I actually went to school with now that are full time commercial fishermen, there's some, and some do really good at it. You got to hustle and not be, not many lazy bones in your body, and kind of got to have a good work ethic and good game plan. A few of them still do it, but it is a hard way to make a living, especially nowadays. It seems like.

Anna Marie Switzer 20:25
Yeah, for sure, I have a lot of I have a lot of respect for both jobs.

Jason Michels 20:29
Right.

Anna Marie Switzer 20:30
It's definitely like both are very hard-working jobs over here. I think in terms of Cherry Point, another thing that I've been looking at or interested is, like, the role of women, because what I've seen so far in other oral history

interviews is that, like, it offers women jobs that they might not have had before. Have you noticed any change in terms of that, like, maybe with, like, people around you, or?

Jason Michels 20:57
Maybe a little bit, I mean, I've had women supervisors before in my job. I mean, it's a pretty diverse mix of people, really, because it's, I'm pretty sure it's the largest single site employer east of Raleigh, is what I've heard before anyway. So it's a lot, a lot of people from all different backgrounds, from people, there's summer hires now that are juniors in high school to 70 year old people up there from every walk of life. I mean, it's a pretty diverse group with, like I said, definitely women. As far as any role, there's women mechanics in my shop, engineers, logisticians, production control, just various almost every field I can think of has, you know, men and women both doing side by side, doing the job.

Anna Marie Switzer 21:45
Yeah. And I guess the interviews that I was reading were from, like, the ‘60s, so I think times for women are a little bit different. And so, you mentioned your wife. What does your wife do?

Jason Michels 21:54
She is a graphic artist. Like, since she went to Carolina and got a degree in journalism, um. Like I said, we have two boys, and she's a full time mom, and does some graphics on the side.

Anna Marie Switzer 22:07
Do, um, let me restart that. Where do your boys go to school around here?

Jason Michels 22:12
So I have a 16-year-old that goes to East Carteret. And then I have a six year old that goes to Beaufort Elementary, which is right, right here. Close.

Anna Marie Switzer 22:15
Cool. Do you do you plan on, like, continuing to raise them here? Like, would you ever?

Jason Michels 22:27
This is where I want to be. This is far west as I'm going.

Anna Marie Switzer 22:31
That's perfect. Yeah. So, would you do you think that, like, as your children are growing up, do you get the sense that they will stay home too? Or do you think?

Jason Michels 22:39
I really don't know. My oldest is, he's getting close. He's a rising junior, so he's got some decisions to make, whether you know what he's going to do, what college or service, or whatever he's going to do. And really, really don't know. I guess it's too early to tell, but I think both of them, I mean, love and appreciate the area, you know.

Anna Marie Switzer 22:58
And is your wife from the area?

Jason Michels 23:00
Yeah, Ma'am, she's from right here. Down here in Beaufort.

Anna Marie Switzer 23:02
[Michels' son enters] Hi! Um, yeah. Let me think of what else if you were thinking about, like, big changes that we were talking about, like, kind of within the past two years.

Michel's son 23:16
We're leaving in like 15 minutes.

Jason Michels 23:18
Okay, all right.

Anna Marie Switzer 23:20
Yeah, so like big changes in the past couple of decades. Would you say that there are any, like, big markers that you can remember, or like?

Jason Michels 23:29
Are we talking about Cherry Point, Beaufort, the Down East community, or what?

Anna Marie Switzer 23:33
That's a great question. I would think specifically Cherry Point. But if you can think of like, just kind of like, specifically Cherry Point, but also Down East and Beaufort, like, kind of just like anything that you would say, like, you have noticed a very big impact.

Jason Michels 23:48
Well, at the base, I would say, not really that much. Because, like I said, the only constant is change is very true up there as far as either what you're working on, or who you're working with, or just different things, um, I think that was kind of being consistent throughout my career. As far as nothing has been insane the whole time, as far as something's constantly changing or evolving. But around here, so we're in Beaufort now, and Beaufort is not Down East, just people will let you know that quick right east of the North River Bridge is the real Down East. And I'd say Beaufort for sure, as far as the population and the building, in my time here. And like I said, I've lived in Beaufort for 20 years now, is really seem like it's caught hold and taken, you know, really, really taking hold. And the building is, in the past 10 years, probably, is a steep increase, and more of it Down East, too. There's been a lot of building Down East, but I think Down East has been more of the people buying homes and moving in, and more than, Beaufort's had more of the building. And Down East has had more of the people just coming in. "I love this place from somewhere else. I probably have more financial or deeper pockets than you do. I want

to be here." And, you know, I mean, there's been a lot more of that Down East is what, least from my perspective, anyway.

Anna Marie Switzer 25:11
Yeah, that it like, it seems a little bit more like, like tourism over here, and like, more like staying there, like, retirement Down East, I think right is kind of what I've seen. But I hope, in terms of, like, the-- so are you, would you say that you're still pretty, like, plugged into the Down East community?

Jason Michels 25:35
I think so. I mean, I'm still, my son is involved in Scouts, which is in Davis. So, we're down there once a week, and going there tonight. And like I said, a bunch of my friends I grew up with in high school, a lot of them are still either close to me here in Beaufort or live Down East. I mean, I still love Down East like I live there. You know, anybody else we're from, from the Island. So that's what the response is. Yeah, that's right, right, yeah. But I'd say, uh, I'd say, when I think about Down East is as a whole, I mean, people that look out for each other, hardworking people. I mean, like, say just positive, positive vibes.

Anna Marie Switzer 26:00
You had to have three, three families in the graveyard. Would you say, like, as people are facing, like, the people coming in, like, retiring there and then, like, buying up spaces, like, how would you say the community attitude has been towards those people or, like, towards this sort of change that's happening?

Jason Michels 26:36
I'm not around that that much every day since I'm, uh, I live off now. I live in Beaufort now, but, I mean, I haven't heard that much. I mean, not a whole lot of negative connotations. I mean, nothing that's really standing out. As far as you know, everybody coming down here wants to change everything. I mean, some people do, obviously. I mean, that's normal, I think. But um, for the most part, I think people just see it and realize it is what it is. I mean, the people that are selling out, nobody's, I don't think anybody's making them do it. You know what I mean. It's a willful exchange of the land, so it's just part of that process. But I, I'd say overall, people have accepted it, because you can't really do anything about it. Other maybe they can complain. But other than that, in the day it is what it is.

Anna Marie Switzer 27:22
Yeah, that definitely makes sense in terms of like, reasons why, because, while you're not necessarily Down East still, like in the general area, like near the Banks and stuff like that, what is it like? Could you describe what particularly makes you want to stay here? Is it more just like a connection to the place that you you've grown up in?

Jason Michels 27:43
Maybe, I mean, it's the people and it's the place. I mean, I think they're intertwined. I mean, some of my best friends grew up through elementary school and still here. And then it's the community; it's the, it's the heritage; it's everything put together. I mean, like I said, I don't fault anybody for coming out here for the first time and

really liking it and say, “You know what? I wouldn't mind retiring now, or let's see if we can get a summer house in this area.” Because it's just, it's a special place.

Anna Marie Switzer 28:10
It definitely is. You can feel it. Like as soon as I came for the first time, you can. It's definitely special. Um, in terms of maybe moving a little bit away from change in Cherry Point, I have seen so many decoys at the museum, but I really haven't gotten to speak to a carver. So would you mind telling me a little bit about, like, how you learned like to carve and like, what your process has been?

Jason Michels 28:33
So I grew up on the Island, of course, and several people on the Island did that, mainly older gentleman at the time. And I started as maybe 15 years old when my grandparents lived I had a cousin that had a hobby shop. His name was Norman Hancock, and he was a longtime carver that lived across road from my grandparents, and, like I said, a distant cousin. I just remember seeing that as a child, and I remember going over there some and somehow it just kind of sparked my interest. I wanted to try it, and, like I said, with several people around there. And I speak for myself, that the people starting out were extremely supportive. Maybe they were old enough and wise enough to know already we're not going to be here forever if somebody else wants to try to carry us on, let's, you know. But yeah, that's kind of how I started then, and worked with several amazing mentors. I mean, there wasn't a question you couldn't ask that somebody didn't know the answer to, or be able to say, well, I may not know it, but this guy is the man you need to talk to for that. Like, so, everybody, it was being—I cannot think of one negative experience that I encountered as a young man. Just get my license going around to watching these other people getting their opinion or their critique. And then did that for a few years, and then got fairly proficient at it, and still did it as my early 20s, and then probably took a break from it after we got married, got married. And especially after our first son, just in winter, not enough hours in the day, and just kind of took a break from it, maybe got burned out a little bit, and then still solely as a hobby. Then about five years ago, at a Scouting event we had at the Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild, they had the Scouts come in a couple times a year next to carve a decoy. And my son had a lot of interest in it, and kind of like he's kind of got a little bit of talent here. I think so, kind of got my fire going again, and that's something we've done together for probably five, six years now. And I've really enjoyed getting back into it seems like I, I don't know, I like it. It's very rewarding to start out with a piece of wood, and then at the end of the day something you're putting your name on with a branding iron and kind of peaceful, you know, I have a lot of positive feedback too. So that's always helpful.

Anna Marie Switzer 28:53
Having something you've created, like with your own hands, is really, really cool.

Jason Michels 31:17
Right, yes, ma'am.

Anna Marie Switzer 31:19
In terms of the Boy Scouts, or is it, it's Boy?

Jason Michels 31:23
Yes, Ma'am.

Anna Marie Switzer 31:24
Is that like specific to, like, is it specific to the high school? Or is where is that connected through?

Jason Michels 31:28
No so, so that can be, I think they start at age 12, so when you're starting in middle school, and then, but Down East to Davis is we've got an awesome Scout troop, 252, and my son, he's getting ready to start his Eagle Scout prize. He's at the museum.

Anna Marie Switzer 31:45
What's his Eagle Scout project?

Jason Michels 31:47
He's actually just got to prove—he's actually going to be building like a duck blind out front and with some like, different signage, I guess, showing you what the blind is and educating people to come what it's, what its function was, past and present for the community. So, he's excited.

Anna Marie Switzer 32:03
That is really cool. Yeah, I've seen a lot like the Boy Scouts mentioned in a couple of the books about Down East, but I was interested. I think that's something that I definitely want to look into.

Jason Michels 32:14
Yeah, and we were fortunate, a couple years ago, I think for two years that Clay—his name is Clay—we actually helped out at the museum, I think actually with the Fourth of July thing a couple years ago, where we actually had, like painting heads, like decoy heads, or silhouettes. Where Clay and I would actually have kids come in and would actually kind of guide them through the process. So, it was pretty cool. Like I said, with the museum, they're constantly doing stuff like that, just promoting, promoting that and awesome organization, for sure.

Anna Marie Switzer 32:48
Yeah, Karen's not sleeping, speaking of hard work, and she's definitely there. So, with the internship, we're kind of trying to, I think our goal right now is to make like a timeline group exhibit, which is why I was kind of asking about Cherry Point if, if you were thinking of a way that you wanted to, like, capture Down East culture, like the Harkers island that you grew up with, like, what are the important things that you would want us to showcase, or that you would want to see?

Jason Michels 33:22
I mean, I guess when I think about the only thing about the people in the heritage, I mean, people over there, you take for granted, or some people over there that can do anything it seems like, but just the different occupations and different things that have gone on throughout the years of different like I said, dating back to the commercial fishermen, even present day, but the decoy makers, the net makers, the quilt makers, the

different things that were kind of unique to Down East or Harkers Island, I think, is what really makes it special. That's what I think of.

Anna Marie Switzer 33:57
Certainly I don't think I've ever seen such like, I don't know, between the quilts and the decoys. I mean, everything is, like, just beautifully hand crafted, which is really, really cool.

Jason Michels 34:08
Yeah, like I said, and I remember growing up like I said, there was at least three fish houses on the island that people commercial fishermen. Like I said, in addition to pulling crab pots, we set some nets, but you'd sell your catch there. And I remember as a young man seeing like, my mom and my aunt, like, shucking scallops at a scallop house. I mean, there's exhibit a museum right now, like blue dioramas, and that's it. It'll be like a snapshot, you know, but um, like I said it's just, hardworking people, that just the awesome community.

Anna Marie Switzer 34:39
Yeah, it truly is. Um, is there anything else that you would want to speak about, any questions that, I mean, thinking about Cherry Point, but like thinking broader towards that, just like any experiences that you've had Down East that you would want to share, or?

Jason Michels 34:57
I mean, I got involved in the decoy thing fairly as a young man, and at the time, the guild is just formed to get the Carvers Guild in the museum. So I was, I've known Karen basically my whole life. And like I said, I've been to Washington, DC before with Karen, you know. But it's just kind of, it's kind of neat that that we do have organizations like the guild and the museum that are so focused on preserving the heritage. I mean, it's, I said that museum, if you've never been to it, I mean it's, it's a first class establishment from top to bottom. I mean, it's, and it's not just decoys. I mean, it's the community. It showcases everything. Everything east of that North River Ridge is in that museum. I mean, and not just Down East. I mean, the whole county's got part of it too. I get it. But going through all the communities, and just being able to see the churches, the way they built boats, the way they did different things is pretty unique. I think it's pretty cool.

Anna Marie Switzer 36:04
I like how upstairs there's like, each community has its own tables, which I think is really, really cool. You mentioned churches. That's kind of something I also want to explore, kind of like Boy Scouts. What did you grow up in the church or right? And I know that it's a little bit contentious, like, there's a lot going on there. Which church did you grow up?

Jason Michels 36:26
They call it the Mormon Church.

Anna Marie Switzer 36:27
The Mormon Church?

Jason Michels 36:28
Yes, ma'am, yep.

Anna Marie Switzer 36:29
Are you still practice?

Jason Michels 36:30
I do not go to the Mormon church anymore, but that's where I grew up. Like I said, very good organization, very good church. And I think—don't quote me—as I think there may be seven churches on the Island, I'm not for sure, but I know it's a lot of them, but, uh, yeah, there's several, several to pick from, for sure.

Anna Marie Switzer 36:48
Well, if, do you have any other like, in exploring like the history of Cherry Point and change, do you have any suggestions of other people that I could talk to, or people that you think of when you think of Cherry Point, which, I guess you have a lot of people from Cherry Point. And then they have, like a library, so you'd have to have, like, some sort of humanities degree there too. So it definitely seems pretty wild. Well, I think, I think that's all the questions that I have for you. And if you don't have anything else to share, I think that

Jason Michels 37:06
Right, I mean, like I said there's a diverse group of people up there too. I think I've used that word a couple times, but you've got people, 16-year-olds, that are just starting to figuring out, maybe how to clean apart, or how to do one of the procedures. Just to start out, then you've got engineers up there trying to figure out materials lab. You got all these different people from several different backgrounds, degrees. You know, you can have an engineering degree, a business degree. I mean, it's just a whole bunch of different people up there doing a bunch of different things. It's not just, not just like you're at a car plant where you're working on cars, even though it takes a lot of different people to get a car out the door too. But it's just a whole lot of different people up there, kind of working on stuff, I guess. No, like I said, you've got or I give you my number. Karen has it. If you do think of something on the way home, or whenever, if you want to talk again or have a question, I'll be glad to answer to whatever you need

Anna Marie Switzer 38:21
Okay, perfect.

Jason Michels 38:22
Thank you so much. Yes, ma'am,

Anna Marie Switzer 38:24
I've really enjoyed talking to you

Jason Michels 38:25
Yes, ma'am.